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THE CLASSICAL COOK.

The classical cook first appears in the odor of sanctity, for in Trojan days the head of the family or clan discharged, or at least superintended, this household function, since a dinner involved also a sacrifice, and he was the priest. But he might also delegate this duty to his eldest son.¹ Then it was entrusted regularly to some fit member of the clan, who became the orderer of the sacrificial rites; he summoned the guests; he marshalled them according to their rank. Thence sprang the rules of precedence at the feast, the first step to proper table manners. The Dorian *karux*, the summoner to the table, became, as he grew skillful in larger functions, the Ionian *kerux*, the summoner to the Ecclesia. These two offices were at first filled by one person. Later on social needs separated them. Then the *karux* was called the *mageiros*, the grinder. But this early severance of servile mill-toil from the oversight of cooking forced the kneader to become the baker. Thus he became a *magos*, the creator of bewitching effects in foods—a magician. Next, the early processes were left to another, and the skilled *mageiros* held fast only to the seething pot and the stew-pan which he inherited from the ancestral *karux*.

It is clear now why the caldron became the proper utensil for the witch or the wizard. What wonderful changes in art and science are preserved in words! The stately Talthybius, the orderer of the rites at the solemn truce between the Greeks and the Trojans, the herald of chieftains, is the brother of the sacrificial cook, the progenitor of the magician, and the remote ancestor of Friar Bacon. The descent is without a break.

The *mageiros* prided himself upon the dignity of his office. Heroes were his patron deities. The Trojan *chef* sacrificed to Daiton, a name suggesting heroic feasting.

¹ Ath. xiv., c. 79, quoting Homer.

The Spartan cook—though Lycurgus so pitifully narrowed him to black bread and pea-soup—invoked Matton and Keraon.

But the profession was to rise to higher honor. It furnished to great states monarchs who displayed that constructive ability on the throne which they had developed in the kitchen. Was it not a dictum that the qualities of a great leader were essential to a good cook? Cadmus is a case in point.¹ He was a Phœnician, and the son of King Agenor. By a reverse of fortune he became the *chef* in the royal kitchen at Zidon. It was his office to arrange the little suppers the Princess Harmonia gave her maids of honor. From the resources of the royal kitchen what delicate dishes could he not have prepared! In the prime of his young manhood, he was a noble servitor at those exquisite feasts. It needs no imagination to show forth how he expressed his passion in lovely *plats*; how he molded wondrous shapes, delicate in perfume—odor is too coarse a word—perfect in taste. This subtle blending into one harmonious whole of the most varied viands appealed to her tenderest sympathy. The princely cook seized his opportunity. One morning the breakfast set before the Zidonian King was a failure. Cadmus had disappeared. Two hours later a eunuch from the women's palace hurriedly reported that the Lady Harmonia could not be found. Inquiry at the quay revealed that Cadmus had ordered the fastest fishing-boat to be prepared for a midnight excursion to the fishing grounds.

What wrath and confusion filled the whole palace! The story began to spread. Then it was hushed up by a tale that the Harmonia who had disappeared was a favorite flute-player belonging to the Princess, who was herself so chagrined that she had taken to her bed. When Cadmus heard this, how scornfully he laughed! And this was not the only disaster at the royal palace. The Princess Europa had eloped but a few weeks before, so a clever tale was worked up—how Cadmus was sent to look for her, and,

¹ Ath. xiv., c. 77.

failing to bring her back, quietly chose not to return, and married a Lady Harmonia of Thebes. The Thebans to this day call this story a myth.

History repeats itself; for does not Mr. Pendennis record how the Chevalier laid siege to the heart of Miss Amory by the very same parallels?

Another cook gives his name to the first properly-dated Olympiad, B.C. 776. The Olympic games were founded by King Iphitus, one hundred and eight years before. But Choræbus the Elian, the *mageiros*, broke the record in the foot-races, and his victory headed the first public registers from which the chronology of all Greece was dated. The name of a Cook stands first in the records of historic times.

But the *mageiros* could claim a still greater dignity.¹ In Athens a free-born citizen belonging to the guild of cooks was "political," and was called a *maison*; while a country-trained cook brought to town, in the service of some rustic *parvenu*, as we see from Aristophanes' report of the case of Strepsiades, was called a *tettix*. A grave guild would naturally select a suitable name, severe and suggestive. But the chirrupy nick-name "grasshopper" humorously hit off the awkwardness of the provincial competitor; yet the *tettix* was complimented, for the best Athenian families bore, on pin and brooch, the insect as a symbol of their patriotic belief that they were sprung from the soil itself.

Since the free-born cook had a right to a seat in the Ecclesia he could enter the Boulé, and could help to cook accounts. The scribblers of the middle comedy wrongly imagined that "Maison" was the name of a certain Megarian cook who migrated to Athens, and there perpetrated a dish which became popular, and also invented a sphinx-faced mask. He is alluded to in these lines:

"A human sphinx it was, and not a cook
Into my household next I sadly took.
A sphinx, ye gods! whom none could understand,
A-babbling riddles from a foreign land."

¹ Ath. viv., c. 77.

A word more about the bond between the herald and the cook. As the soothsayer assisted in the inspection of victims, he claimed kin with the herald. But the butcher was of the same guild, and was also recognized by the cook, for the apprentice to the sauce-pan began as an assistant in the meat-stall. This historic connection between the butcher, the cook, the soothsayer, and the herald has been strangely overlooked by writers on heraldry. It traces back to the sacrificial rites, and to the feast that followed, and is of prime importance, as it gives a sanction (not a sanctity) to a good deal of the assumption and airs which a modern cook gives herself. It may be retorted that the modern cook is usually of the female sex, and of Milesian ancestry. The point is superficially taken. The priestesses of Diana were Karyatides, and therefore cooks, and Asiatic Milesians. The lines of connection are clear, though delicate.

It may be well, at the cost of proper chronological order, to complete the proofs of the cook's official connection with sacrifices. The only letter preserved to us of the correspondence of Queen Olympias with her son Alexander the Great is about a cook. "Accept"—she writes—"from your mother, Pelignan the cook.¹ He knows the sacred ritual your Father practised when sacrificing, and the orgiastic, and Bacchic rites; and what Olympias herself prepares for the sacrifices. Do not receive him slightly, but take him, and send him back as soon as possible."

Pelignan sounds frenchy — was he a Galatian?

Another grave ritual function fell to the maison. He was very often the hierophant at weddings.² Now, shorn of this office he putters over the preliminaries of roasting, stewing, frying, and gravy-making. But then his were the libations, the sacrifices, the auspices, the prayers at the ceremony. Such an office could not have been tamely surrendered, but I can find no trace of any resistance.

So important a person needed a liberal education.³ The

¹Ath. xiv., c. 18. ²Menander's play of the "Flatterer." ³Ath. xiv. 80 seq.

true cook, if caught young, and if he displayed any aptitude, was carefully trained. After passing successfully his novitiate in dish-washing, he was initiated into the elementary secrets of the craft through some simple dishes. He was thoroughly tested as an apprentice, before he was trusted with the deeper mysteries. At the close of this stage of his probation he was taught some liberal accomplishment.

Here is the report of a conversation between a wealthy dinner-giver in Athens, and a noted cook whom he had engaged.¹ The employer complained that the artist did very little. He evidently was as much afraid of his cook as we are now.

"Your manners are very courteous and genteel, but you do very little," quoth the master of the house.

"Yes? But you know, sir, that there are cooks and — cooks. You spent a good deal of time, doubtless, in studying other subjects besides your proper profession, that you might be liberally educated. So we have to learn other arts besides cooking. Let me mention them: Astrology, Geometry, and Medicine. These we have to know."

"Right so. But I don't see why."

"Yes? Well—Astrology. We ought to know the habits and ways of fish, and the seasons when they run, and what fish are in season and what are out. These are all known by observing what sign the sun has reached. There is the greatest difference. A pig-fish in season is finer than a tunny out of season."

"Good. But how about Geometry?"

"Permit me. I see a globe there. Set it before you. Divide it thus—and thus—in the fashion of our art. Now the other side. There! See?"

"Pray go no further. I see; but how about Medicine?"

"Yes? Well, some foods, you know, are good for the wind, others are indigestible; others are not good at all. Nor are all viands, that might form a dainty feast, compatibles—to speak medically. We have to proportion them,

¹ Ath. vii., c. 37.

and to offset some dishes by others. By a use—an intelligent transference—of the principles of the medical profession, I make my dinners symmetrical in many ways. Then, too, the arrangement of the dishes! Ah, there is much to learn in the art of cooking.”

“Now listen to me a moment.”

“Sir?”

“You needn’t trouble yourself about my table. You may have all your time to devote to your studies.”¹

It is not a mere fancy sketch; it is a study from the life, and has been repeated in private impromptu rehearsals every decade since the *mageiros* developed into a distinct and independent artist. This ancient cook was not one to go about, ladle and carving-knife in hand, ready to show how nicely he could cook a steak or toss a fish. He valued himself too highly. He was trained to respect his art, and so to respect himself. But your really great *mageiros*, though he magisterially lectured his pupils, was not above doing a bit of apprentice work himself.

How natural is this little scene in the restaurant of a certain *mageiros*. The artist’s pride is most skillfully touched off:

“Here are choice fish from the sea, ready scaled, side by side;
 Help here! the sauces now mix by receipts I have tried.
 Put me this pan on the coals, and but spill on the fire
 Just—there!—the slightest wee drop of fine oil; see how higher
 Flames up the coal, and your fish are just done to a turn;
 Once more a toss—now beware lest they brown to a burn.
 Chop up some herbs. That apprentice must see to each dish
 That it is daintily fit for the guest’s slightest wish.
 Garnish it neatly, and sprinkle the sauce to his taste.
 Epicures only should taste it, else ’tis but a waste.”²

Restaurants under skilled *mageiroi* were very frequent. Every Greek city contained a number of them. In Athens the young gentlemen were fond of getting up a sort of club dinner. The cooking at home was generally abominable;

¹ Ath. vii., c. 37. ² Ath. vii., c. 40.

besides, one could not well, from the domestic arrangements, invite his young friends to dine with him at his own house. So dining clubs were numerous. The mageiros had then a fair chance to show his skill and to acquire wealth. For instance, the popular orator, Demetrius Phalereus, was the moneyed partner in a firm which furnished at wholesale to caterers the vinegar, fine oil, cheese, and bread which, with other things, made up an Athenian feast. He had bought, also, at a low price a noted cook, Moschion (*Calfe*), and taking a fancy to him, gave him the broken cases of oil, and the other odds and ends which go to make up the wastage in a wholesale warehouse. With these perquisites Moschion opened a lunch-room, which proved so successful that in two years' time he was able to buy three flats; and a flat in Athens was a paying property.¹

The cook was not an afrit of steam, smoke, and odor of roasts, but a human being who felt his own worth and the importance of his art to the well-being of society. Was he not liberally educated? Did he not have a training in the artistic side of his profession? It was not strange, then, that he was tempted to presume upon others' forbearance, and was quick to resent interference or direction. Are there not on record modern stories, yet true, of rude messages sent up from the lord of the stew-pan to the overlord of the parlor?

A master of his profession could command his own price. He was ranked among the sophists—and correctly; for what is food but raw material sophisticated? He did not dare to claim the rank of a philosopher; he had to be modest, or his brethren would have roasted him for his pretension. After his death such a rank could be granted to his memory. His rivals could applaud his skill in his specialty when they no longer feared him. So it was admitted that Agis cooked fish *à merveille*; that Nereus, the Chian, was versed in the mystery of serving conger eels; that Chariades of Athens dished up, with fig-leaves, the most delicate white omelettes;

¹ Ath. vii., c. 60.

that Lamprias, the Spartan, showed what could be done with black broths ; that Aphthonetus was the authority on sausages ; that Eusthenes studied effects in pea-porridge ; that Ariston was a superb caterer for impromptu dinners.¹ These were the Seven Sages of the Philosophy of Cooking. All who came after them were either clever sophists or else built on the principles of these masters.

We have a few scattered notices of cooks who wore the papyrus cap about 490—330 B. C. Sicon first brought the study of astrology to the aid of accurate cookery.² He also mastered physics for the same purpose. Boidion and Chariaides were of his school. Archestratus ransacked the then accessible world for new edibles, and wrote an epic-poem on the Pleasures of the Table. The Siciliote Labdacus introduced the Sicilian style into Athens. Sophon, the Acarnanian, and Damoxenus, the Rhodian, were fellow-students under Labdacus, who used the famous writings of Chronus as text-books for his school.³ And we must not forget Pelignan, the beloved of Olympias and so tenderly commended to Alexander's care.

The art was developed by peoples who had attained some eminence in either the religious or the social world. After the wasteful feastings and mighty junketings of heroic days, it became possible for a state to develop the true law of dinner-giving.

The Thebans, under the instructions of their King, Cadmus, might have been the perpetuators of a Zidonian school in Greece. In historic times they had the name of being huge eaters, and of being proportionately stupid. Was this a deep stroke of state-craft? Did their mighty founder, remembering how he had combined cooking and diplomacy, fear treasons, strategems, and spoils, and so feed them into sleekness and sleeping well o' nights? It was a grievous error. To perpetuate a dynasty, he sacrificed a great school which might have changed the future of all Greece. Theban voracious habits were a pan-Hellenic jest. Later on

¹ Ath. ix., c. 24. ² Ath. ix., c. 22. ³ Ath. ix., c. 68.

the Thebans medized, and naturally, for they traced their establishment to an Asiatic. But out of antipathy to them—so subtle is the force of habit—the rest of Greece resisted the Persian. Then came Marathon and Salamis! Thebes lost her political opportunities; Athens grasped hers with both hands, and afterwards rose to eminence in cookery. Was it her reward?

The Macedonians vulgarized the refinements Athens had either invented or culled from the large experience which her merchants or sea-captains brought home. The Macedonians relegated all their cookery worthy of the name to slaves captured in war. They had no national dish. No wonder Demosthenes exclaimed that Macedonian slaves were worthless. A captive invented a dish—the *mattue*—which became popular throughout Greece. But it soon lost its distinctive character; and its foundation—a highly-spiced batter—was applied to any food that could be baked in it. This was the only one they contributed to the list of popular dishes in Greece. Wherever they colonized, the Macedonians assumed the local dress and dietary. No wonder their rule vulgarized both the language and the statesmanship of Hellas.

The lively Delians had the oldest reputation, if they did not actually found the oldest Greek school. Their islet was the most ancient festal gathering-place on all the seaboard of Hellas, even from Homeric times. The Temple of Apollo drew crowds of worshippers. They had to be fed, and many of them insisted on having their national dishes furnished them. What a school for a skillful master, watchful to select new ideas for his apprentices!

At times Delos must have been converted into a vast picnic ground. Its fame spread throughout all Greek-speaking people. Even the Persians, in the midst of their bitter wars with Greece, not only spared it but made large offerings to the temple. Possibly they found their own best recipes in use there. If so, it was the unconscious diplomatic skill of the cook that saved the place. This fame had

no little loving familiarity mixed with it. Their extravagant admirers called the *mageiroi*,—demiurges, kid-dressers, round-bellies, piggy, lambkin, cakemaker, temple-sweeper (a most honorable nickname), fish-tosser, and, lastly and most curiously, kitchen-table-dresser *eleodytai*. This last was a notable term of endearment and acquired a legal force. For the eminent lawyer Polycrates, in drawing up an indictment where the parties were all Delians, does not so nominate them but calls them *Eleodytai*, neatly implying that they were both Delians and cooks.¹ The Amphictyonic law directed that these *eleodytai* must furnish the water,—for what, we are not told; but king Amphictyon was taught to mingle water with his wine. They were cup-bearers. These Delian cooks were called the Guests of the God, and summoners of the people to the feast. What loving memories of feasts never to be forgotten these nicknames embalm and send down to us!

Phoenix, a stout old merchant captain would, after he had brought his freight to the consignees in the *Peiræus*, spend the time till the next cargo was ready, in *Delos*; for, he said, he ‘found there three things he liked,—a good market; people from every part of the world; and the guests of *Apollo*.’ ’Tis a pity we have not some of the yarns which he must have spun off with such gusto over his wine in a *Delian café*.

A school of some promise sprang up in *Sicily*, and it really attained great eminence yet, it soon died away. It sent out able cooks to other lands, who won fame. But at home the real reason of their failure was that they mixed their sauces without judgment. At least, the great authority, *Archestratus* writes,—“don’t let a *Siciliote* or *Italiote* cook touch your fish. He will ruin it with cheese, and too thin vinegar, and *assafœtida*. He may know much about the thrice-accursed *Rockfish*, and he has many clever ideas about a dinner and how to prepare dishes with sticky sauces, but —.”² He was perfectly right. Yet, the *Siciliotes*

¹ *Ath.* iv., c. 73. ² *Ath.* vii., c. 86.

were noted for the dainty tables they set. Plato, however, objected to their too great variety, and his taste in all things was exquisite.

The Delphians had, perhaps, still better opportunities than the Delians, for they came later and could profit by experience. Apollo instructed his first priests—who by the way were Cretan pirates—in a rough cookery; but the Cretans were no mean proficient themselves.¹ The long train of worshippers, the royal embassies, the state Theorias, the deputations from every barbaric nation, as well as from every petty state of their beloved Hellas, must have given the cooks of Delphi unparalleled opportunities to gather from the whole œcumenical world new recipes, rare dishes, tempting dainties, attractive conceits, and splendid barbaric inventions. But they deprived themselves of this grand concurrence of means and instruments for building up a school in cookery that should really be pan-Hellenic in its extent, sound in principle, and as enduring as the educated taste of man which could survive the shocks of change and decay. The town council had granted to the Magnesians, who pretended to be colonists from Delphi, the monopoly of furnishing to strangers lodging, salt, oil, vinegar, candles and candle-sticks, beds, coverlets, and dining tables.² These were in the hands of the Magnesian ring at Delphi. We can only conjecture why these great franchises were granted, for the ruins of Delphi have not yet been examined for inscriptions which might throw light upon this aldermanic folly of the Delphian Boulé. Ephesus, the seat of Diana's worship, was of surpassing splendor. Policy may have dictated the concession of this monopoly for the purpose of establishing relations with a city like Magnesia of such political importance, and so near Ephesus, and which would advertise the superior oracular advantages of Delphi without creating any unpleasantness between these twin deities. The plan certainly succeeded. The Magnesians in Asia Minor were a good advertising medium. The error lay in making the

¹ Hom. Hymn to Apollo. ² Ath. iv., c. 74., seq.

monopoly perpetual. These Magnesians had no true theory of their art, nor were they competent, and the Delphians, who, as Cretans whose social life centered upon club houses, (*Syssitia*), could have produced—if not a school at least some renowned masters, were estopped by this unlucky monopoly. They sank to the rank of caterers. For it does not follow that, where multitudes most do congregate, there good restaurants must abound. Something more is needed, else the crowds that filled the streets of Corinth and of Paphos ought to have produced some noteworthy results.

The cook was thus not merely an important and very real person, but the representative of a culture having resources and apparatus by which he illustrated, unconsciously but most delicately, the genius of his race. In the Greek Cook, crowned with rare successes, yet smirched with disastrous failures, and unable to establish his supremacy, we have an epitome of Greek character, capable of brilliant achievements, clothed with poetic insight, but wasting itself in those petty jealousies and frivolous aims which destroyed all its genius could gain.

A. A. BENTON.